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Summary record of the 2nd meeting
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Chair: Mr. Gunnarsson ..... (Iceland)
later: Ms. Kaszás (Vice-Chair) ..... (Hungary)

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 27: Social development (*continued*) (A/72/169)

(a) Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (*continued*) (A/72/158 and A/72/211)

(b) Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (*continued*) (A/72/159, A/72/161, A/72/166, A/72/189 and A/72/190)

1. **Mr. Barros Melet** (Chile) said that since the country's return to democracy, Chile had worked to put in place a rights-based social protection system. Under President Bachelet, particular emphasis had been placed on achieving social objectives and combating inequality. His Government was revising a social security programme that supported the most vulnerable groups and had introduced measures to help persons with disabilities enter the workforce.

2. Chile had presented its voluntary national review at the 2017 high-level political forum on sustainable development, identifying its main challenges in working towards the Sustainable Development Goals as reducing poverty and inequality and achieving sustainable and inclusive economic and social development. To address those challenges, his Government had launched an education reform, with a view to ensuring that everyone had access to inclusive, free and high-quality education up to the tertiary level; tax reforms, which were intended to increase gross domestic product by three percentage points to finance the educational reforms and enhanced social protection; and labour reforms, to strengthen collective labour rights and industrial relations.

3. Both income-based and multidimensional poverty indices were declining. According to income-based poverty measures, 11.7 per cent of the population were poor, while multidimensional poverty affected 20 per cent of the country. Children and young people were disproportionately affected by poverty, as were indigenous groups and rural communities, and his Government was working to promote their rights and strengthen policies on children.

4. His Government had taken a number of legal, policy and institutional measures to reduce inequality in the health sector. It had established a programme that provided all Chileans with treatment for specified conditions, was gradually extending universal health coverage and had introduced a system to cover high-cost treatments.

5. With regard to achieving greater equality between women and men, which was a pressing challenge, progress had been made in developing a national gender equality plan for the period 2018–2030, reforming the electoral system and taking affirmative action to increase the number of women elected to office. In addition, in August 2017 a law decriminalizing abortion in certain circumstances had been passed, and a bill on equal marriage had been brought before Congress.

6. **Mr. Morales López** (Colombia) said that implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development required continued commitment to eradicating all forms of poverty and reducing inequities. As noted in the Report on the World Social Situation 2016, one of the main challenges was growing inequality, which was hampering progress towards eradicating poverty and achieving other social development goals.

7. In the spirit of leaving no one behind, the development model must empower persons with disabilities, who were disproportionately affected by violence, poverty, unemployment and inequality, so that they could become agents of change and work towards achieving the 2030 Agenda. Families were also important agents of sustainable development, which was why his country was committed to ensuring that they were given the opportunity to flourish culturally, economically and socially and was coordinating its family policy with other policies.

8. Older persons should also be fully included and able to exercise their rights. In that connection, Colombia supported the work of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing and the development of an international instrument on the human rights of older persons. Lastly, he noted that young people were agents of change and peacebuilding. Real change could only be achieved by empowering them. Highlighting the importance of ensuring effective youth participation, he said that the One Young World Summit would be held in Bogotá from in October 2017. Member States must promote the socioeconomic integration of young people.

9. **Ms. Natividad** (Philippines) said that the country's long-term development vision, "AmBisyon Natin 2040", had been developed following a nationwide study that had revealed that Filipinos hoped for a country where no one was poor and where people lived long and healthy lives in safe, vibrant, diverse and resilient communities. The Government had

adopted a number of measures to ensure that development was inclusive and that poor and marginalized communities were provided with opportunities and services.

10. The country's flagship poverty alleviation programme, the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Programme, was a conditional cash transfer scheme that required children aged 3 to 18 to attend school and get immunized and dewormed; pregnant women to receive regular check-ups; and household heads to attend family development sessions. Members of participating households could also attend community-based programmes on microenterprise development and employment facilitation.

11. Over 4 million households were enrolled in the Programme, including 570,000 indigenous households and 217,000 households where at least one person had a disability. As a result of the Programme, poverty had been reduced by 1.5 million per year, and 87 per cent of participating parents were more optimistic about their children's futures.

12. Young people accounted for 30 per cent of the population and ensuring their empowerment, participation and well-being was a priority, as evidenced by the Philippine Youth Development Plan. Young people were encouraged to get involved in nine areas, namely health, education, economic empowerment, social inclusion, equity, governance, active citizenship, the environment and global mobility.

13. Under the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act, tuition was free for students attending state and local universities and state-run technical and vocational schools. In addition, paid internships were available for poor college students, public employment service offices helped young people to secure employment, and the JobStart Philippines Programme provided out-of-school and at-risk young people with training and internships to increase their chances of securing employment.

14. **Mr. AlKadi** (Saudi Arabia) said that it was important to support Member States' efforts to implement their national development programmes in accordance with their national priorities and circumstances and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In that regard, it was also important to take into consideration the religious, social, cultural and economic characteristics of States, and address the political factors that impeded social development, including foreign occupation, which had a significant negative impact on all individuals in society, particularly in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories.

15. Saudi Arabia continued to make significant investments in its human capital, including in the fields of health and education. In terms of human development, Saudi Arabia had been ranked among the most advanced countries in the world in the United Nations Development Programme 2016 Human Development Report. Saudi Arabia provided all its citizens with free, high-quality primary, secondary and tertiary education and every year allocated more than $53 billion, equivalent to almost 22 per cent of its national budget, to the country's education sector. The Government had also established 34 free State-run universities, and a well-funded educational programme that every year gave more than 150 thousand male and female Saudi students the opportunity to study abroad. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia allocated more than $32 billion annually, equivalent to some 14 per cent of the national budget, to support the country's healthcare system and medical research, and all Saudi citizens received free, high-quality healthcare services.

16. In line with the Saudi Vision 2030, the Saudi Government was striving to increase the country's ranking in terms of social capital and raise it from twenty-sixth position to among the top 10 countries. The Vision was intended to ensure that Saudi citizens enjoyed social prosperity and to address the challenges impeding social development by reducing unemployment and boosting domestic and foreign investment to increase employment opportunities for all members of society. The Government was also keen to involve young people in Saudi Arabia in decision-making and had appointed many young people to prominent positions, believing that their ideas would help the country to become one of the most developed in the world. Saudi Arabia was also striving to promote the rights of older persons and persons with disabilities and ensure that they enjoyed access to all the services they required. In closing, he underscored his Government's ongoing commitment to work with the United Nations and the international community to promote social development, reduce poverty, support health and educational programmes, and combat all forms of corruption.

17. **Ms. Burton** (Australia), speaking as a youth delegate, said that young people contributed to humankind's shared future not only as a useful economic resource, but also because they offered a nuanced perception of the challenges facing the world and could make intelligent contributions to public discourse. Young people were as diverse and complex as adults and should therefore be treated in the same way. Similarly, it was false to separate youth issues from adult ones, as young people were affected by the

same issues and faced many of the same barriers and inequalities as adults.

18. Many young people were unable see themselves reflected in those in power and felt disconnected from the decisions made. They did, however, consider themselves to be members of a global community and realized that the world's major challenges went beyond national borders. With support, young people could lead the way to a fair and just future in which all persons were free and equal, but the only way forward was as a community. She called on Member States to create such a community in which young people could take ownership of the journey to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and feel celebrated, supported, engaged, and powerful.

19. *Ms. Kaszás (Hungary), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

20. **Mr. Giorgio** (Eritrea) said that poverty, youth unemployment and social exclusion were serious challenges in developing countries. Economic growth was not enjoyed by all and in some cases it had come at the cost of certain sectors of society. Noting that social problems were one of the main causes of civil strife and state collapse, he said that there was a need to rethink national and international tools and policies; address the obstacles preventing States from achieving their socioeconomic goals, including the role of international financial and trade systems and political pressure; bring about lasting peace; and respect the right of countries to chart their own paths.

21. His country's nation-building strategy was geared towards achieving rapid, balanced, home-grown and sustainable economic growth, with a view to building a just, prosperous and harmonious nation. The key principles were self-reliance, equitable distribution of development and popular participation in decision-making. Considerable investments had been made to bridge the development gap, with an emphasis on improving the situation of historically disadvantaged groups. Despite limited national resources, the difficult regional situation and external hostilities, his Government was committed to ensuring food security, expanding access to drinking water, education and health care and improving the quality of life of all Eritreans.

22. Eritrea was one of the only African countries to have achieved all of the health-related Millennium Development Goals. Education was free all the way up to the tertiary level. The country was on track to achieve food security thanks to a major water and soil conservation scheme and increased use of irrigation, which allowed the country to harvest up to four times a year. In addition, nutrition had improved owing to the increased variety of produce available. The Government continued to make direct payments totalling $20 million to the families of soldiers killed in battle and worked closely with the Eritrean War-Disabled Veterans Association to eliminate social stigma and ensure that veterans received skills training and medical care and participated actively in decision-making.

23. **Ms. Kottearachchi** (Sri Lanka), speaking as a youth delegate, said that for years the responsibility of creating an environment conducive to the development of young people had rested with older generations, but the Sustainable Development Goals had given young people a pivotal role to play. Her country, which had a dedicated sustainable development ministry, strongly believed that young people had the potential to contribute to achieving the Goals. The current Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth, Jayathma Wickramanayake, was from Sri Lanka and had inspired many young people through her activism, particularly as girls in Sri Lanka were often marginalized. Young people — defined in the National Youth Policy as those aged between 15 and 29 — accounted for close to 23 per cent of the population. They had diverse needs, wants and identities and it was vital, therefore, to engage with them and ensure that they were properly represented.

24. **Mr. Kannangara** (Sri Lanka), speaking as a youth delegate, said that his country had consistently worked on the issue of youth skills and was proud to have contributed to the declaration of 15 July as World Youth Skills Day. Skills development would yield long-term results by bridging the gap between the skills learned at school and university and the skills needed to secure employment. Since 1938, free education had been a fundamental right in Sri Lanka and the literacy rate was 96.3 per cent. However, young people lacked soft skills such as leadership, team work and critical thinking, all of which were critical to enable them to contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The Government, the National Youth Services Council and the Federation of Youth Clubs were working to address the issue by providing support to young people.

25. **Mr. Estrada Meyer** (Brazil) said that despite recent economic difficulties, Brazil had continued its efforts to eliminate extreme poverty and improve living standards. Payments made to families under the Bolsa Familia programme, which complemented the income of more than 50 million poor Brazilians and encouraged recipients to seek educational, health and social assistance, had risen by 12.5 per cent in 2016.

The Unified Registry for Social Programmes, which contained the disaggregated data of 28 million low-income families, enabled the Government to run 20 programmes related to issues such as housing, child labour, electricity and sanitation.

26. Brazil had presented its voluntary national review in 2017, in which it had underlined its commitment to transparency and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. While extreme poverty had fallen, progress had been uneven. It was important to address inequality as it posed a major challenge to eradicating multidimensional poverty. Brazil had made much progress with regard to income distribution, but a great deal remained to be done.

27. Brazil was committed to promoting social inclusion and combating all forms of discrimination. Polices had been developed to address the specific needs of various groups, including women, people of African descent, children, migrants, refugees, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons and indigenous peoples.

28. The Youth Statute of 2013 promoted youth-specific policies and encouraged youth participation. In 2015, a law had been passed regulating the inclusion of persons with disabilities, which had facilitated the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and led to advances in the health, labour and education sectors. Vulnerable persons over the age of 65 received a minimum monthly payment and over 4 million older persons and persons with disabilities received welfare benefits. The Happy Child Programme ensured that vulnerable children under the age of 6 received proper care, with a view to breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty.

29. **Ms. Likina** (Russian Federation) said that Member States would be in a better position to achieve the 2030 Agenda if they had specific plans for carrying out the decisions of the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly. The Russian Federation considered the Commission for Social Development to be an effective forum in which Member States could coordinate social policies.

30. Despite the impact of the global financial crisis and unilateral sanctions, the Russian Federation fully complied with its social obligations to its citizens. It continued to implement national strategies to promote women, children, elderly persons and the family, bringing many positive social benefits, such as low unemployment and a minimum wage commensurate with the cost of living. In the belief that traditional family bonds contributed to social stability and long-term sustainable development, it also held numerous events every 8 July to commemorate the Day of Family, Love and Fidelity.

31. Her country's policy with regard to young people was anchored on key provisions of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, with a focus on job creation and stable employment. The Russian Federation held numerous youth forums each year and would soon host the XIX World Festival of Youth and Students. With regard to the elderly, the Russian Government had introduced a plan of action to improve the material situation, health care and living conditions of senior citizens.

32. **Ms. Mwangi** (Kenya) said that her country welcomed the theme of the seventy-second session, "Focusing on people: striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet", which was in line with her Government's people-centred approach to development. That approach was underpinned by a robust legal and policy framework, including the Constitution and Vision 2030, the country's blueprint for development. Kenya prioritized the empowerment of women, young people and marginalized groups through affirmative action and various social protection policies.

33. Under the Affirmative Action Policy, 30 per cent of public procurement was reserved for women, young people and persons with disabilities, while the Persons with Disabilities Act required public service and semi-public organizations to reserve 5 per cent of posts for persons with disabilities. Some 75 per cent of students with disabilities were enrolled in mainstream schools and teachers received training in inclusive education. Since 2013, more than 700,000 households had benefited from the National Safety Net Programme, which benefited older persons, persons with severe disabilities, orphans and vulnerable children. Older persons were entitled to free health care and could access credit and cash transfers through the Consolidated Social Protection Fund. Lastly, the Government had refurbished and increased the number of technical and vocational training institutions.

34. Creating jobs and extending social protection to the most vulnerable were considerable challenges, particularly for developing countries. Domestic resource mobilization needed to be complemented by international cooperation and multi-stakeholder partnerships. Noting that peace and development were mutually reinforcing, she said that the security situation in the Horn of Africa was hindering the country's development. Kenya was investing in regional peace and security, but that diverted critical

resources away from development. To accelerate the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals, Kenya had established a partnership platform that was intended to bring together stakeholders such as development partners, the private sector, civil society and the United Nations.

35. **Mr. Qassem Agha** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that, regrettably, progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the goals agreed at the 1995 World Summit for Social Development had fallen short of expectations. Many countries, including the Syrian Arab Republic, lacked the social safety nets necessary to avert disasters such as famine, while terrorism and foreign occupation continued to undermine peace and security and impede social development in many parts of the world.

36. The terrorist war that had been waged against the Syrian Arab Republic for over six years had severely undermined the country's security and development. Despite the huge challenges it faced, the Syrian Government continued to strive to foster economic growth, improve the living conditions of the Syrian people and counter Wahhabi terrorism and the extremist ideologies disseminated by terrorist groups — groups that continued to receive support from certain States in the Arab world, the region and beyond. Those terrorist groups had destroyed grain reserves, water treatment and power generation plants, bridges, schools, hospitals and even Muslim and Christian houses of worship. Their systematic destruction of Syria's infrastructure, coupled with the coercive unilateral economic measures imposed on the Syrian people by the very same States that claimed to be protecting the Syrian people's interests, had devastated the country and constituted a brazen violation of the rights to development and to healthcare.

37. The Syrian Government had submitted evidence to the Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights that the more than 58 sets of unilateral coercive measures imposed against the Syrian Arab Republic had caused significant damage to all sectors of the Syrian economy, while a 2016 report by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia had underscored that the inhumane unilateral economic measures imposed on the Syrian Arab Republic by the United States of America and the European Union had had a significant negative impact on the country's civilian population.

38. In closing, he underscored his Government's ongoing commitment to work with the United Nations and humanitarian organizations to promote social development. To achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, the international community must make every effort to counter Wahhabist, takfirist terrorism and reject unilateral economic measures.

39. **Ms. Hyeon** Gyo Suh (Republic of Korea), speaking as a youth delegate, said that States and Governments should prioritize gender equality and the empowerment of women by ensuring that women were properly represented, raising public awareness of gender equality and creating institutional frameworks to prevent gender-based violence. Persons with disabilities were valuable agents of sustainable development and must be given the opportunity to fulfil their potential. Efforts must be made to safeguard their living standards and ensure that they had access to education and skills training. In the light of the ageing global population, countries must develop well-designed pension and health-care systems and learn to harness the skills of older people.

40. Youth empowerment through education and participation in decision-making processes was critical in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. In the Republic of Korea, young people were making their voices heard by engaging with the Government and local authorities to propose policies and monitor decision-making processes. A number of new social policies had been introduced, including one that was intended to boost youth employment by imposing mandatory quotas on the public sector.

41. **Mr. Gertze** (Namibia) said that his country's fifth national development plan, which covered the period 2017–2022, was the result of nationwide consultations and took into account the realities on the ground and the aspirations of all Namibians. One of the focus areas of the plan was social transformation, including human capital and social development. Young people accounted for 37 per cent of the population and his Government was committed to harnessing the demographic dividend, in line with the African Union's theme for the year 2017, "Harnessing the demographic dividend through investments in youth". The plan called for increased investment in education, health care and housing.

42. Namibia prioritized pro-poor policies and social development. For the financial year 2017/18, the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture had received the largest share of the budget — 24 per cent — while the Ministry of Health and Social Services and the Ministry of Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare had also received substantial portions of the budget. The system of grants for orphans and vulnerable children was being expanded, including in remote areas. The

Government was working to keep vulnerable persons above the poverty line and protect them from the effects of inflation. However, the global downturn had severely impacted the country's economy and forced it to make its social safety net more cost-effective.

43. The Government had taken note of the recommendations of the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, Rosa Kornfeld-Matte, as contained in her report on her mission to Namibia (A/HRC/36/48/Add.2). Given that there was no guiding policy framework to deal with older persons' issues, the Ministry of Health and Social Services had embarked on a consultative process with a view to formulating such a framework.

44. **Mr. Rasuli** (Afghanistan) said that Afghanistan had aligned its policies, strategies and development plans with the Sustainable Development Goals. The Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework included three programmes to promote the achievement of the Goals related to poverty reduction and social inclusion. First, the social protection programme focused on increasing the skills and productivity of poor people by providing them with access to labour-intensive paid employment. A substantial number of vulnerable citizens, such as persons with disabilities, widows and elderly citizens would require more targeted assistance. Second, the women's empowerment programme provided start-up technical and financial support to businesses owned by women, as well as funding to enhance women's vocational skills and financial literacy. Third, the citizens' charter programme consisted of a series of partnerships between the Government and communities.

45. The development of Afghanistan could not be guaranteed without peace. Security challenges remained a serious concern for the Afghan Government and people, as terrorist groups targeted public infrastructure and innocent civilians on a daily basis. Although such groups hindered efforts to build a peaceful and prosperous country, Afghanistan remained determined to secure the country from the enemies of civilization and humanity.

46. **Ms. Pham** Thi Kim Anh (Viet Nam) said that inequality was increasingly prevalent and threatened to undermine the progress that had been made in social development since the World Summit for Social Development. The adverse effects of inequality impinged on every aspect of life and negatively affected growth. Reduction of inequality had become vital not only as a way of bolstering social and economic development but also of enhancing social cohesion, political stability and peace.

47. Viet Nam considered comprehensive and high-quality education to be an effective solution to inequality. Education was the main pathway by which vulnerable groups such as women, adolescent girls and persons with disabilities could achieve a better life. Citizens empowered with knowledge, skills and self-confidence were also better placed to control their lives and participate in and contribute to the development process. The Vietnamese Government currently earmarked 20 per cent of its budget to fund tuition fee exemptions and subsidies, and student scholarships and loans, with special consideration for ethnic minorities.

48. **Ms. Krisnamurthi** (Indonesia) said that in the context of the 2030 Agenda, it was important to empower people living in vulnerable situations and ensure their inclusive engagement in the planning and implementation of policies that affected them; promote access to better education, including opportunities to acquire skills required in the knowledge-based economy; and foster active partnership within the international community. The commitments made in the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development were important complements to the 2030 Agenda.

49. Between 2006 and 2016, Indonesia had reduced the percentage of its population living in poverty from 17.75 per cent to 10.7 per cent. Recognizing the family as a fundamental agent of its poverty reduction strategy, the Government had also launched a programme to provide access to free health care and education and adopted a national strategy on the elimination of violence against children. In addition, Indonesia had mainstreamed gender equality in its development agenda, had increased the number of women in decision-making bodies, was establishing a commission to promote the rights of persons with disabilities and had introduced strategies to enhance the health care, participation levels and protection of elderly persons.

50. **Ms. Sorto Rosales** (El Salvador) said that although the vision and objectives approved during the World Summit for Social Development remained relevant, success in reducing poverty, decreasing the gap between developed and developing countries and eradicating inequality had been mixed. To implement the 2030 Agenda, the international community must address inequality between and within countries, while respecting the sovereignty and specificities of each country, abiding by the principle of common but

differentiated responsibilities and placing human beings at the centre of all public initiatives.

51. El Salvador had managed to reduce extreme poverty from 16.1 per cent in 2001 to 7.9 per cent in 2016 by targeting the structural causes of poverty. Since poverty tended to affect vulnerable or marginalized individuals or groups and at different stages in their lives, approaches to countering poverty, inequality and exclusion should be universal and focus on the specific needs of those groups and persons. Thus, given the greater difficulty of escaping poverty at an advanced age and the importance of giving an active role to the elderly in efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, her Government had expanded coverage of the non-contributory State pension and reduced illiteracy rates among the elderly. It had also prioritized young people in its national policies by considering them as an at-risk group, rights holders and strategic development actors. In addition, efforts were being made to provide education in sexual and reproductive health and rights, in conjunction with the Ministry of Health and the United Nations Population Fund.

52. **Ms. Rodríguez Camejo** (Cuba) said that the eradication of poverty was the main pathway to development, as highlighted in the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development. Twenty years on from its adoption, progress in reducing poverty had been uneven and Member States were no closer to eradicating hunger or social exclusion. Member States invested huge sums each year in military expenditures, and yet failed to meet official development assistance commitments or provide sufficient new, predictable funding for genuine cooperation.

53. Cuba was working towards the Sustainable Development Goals with the moral force of having met the Millennium Development Goals and, insofar as its modest means allowed, would continue to assist other developing countries. The low infant mortality rates were a strong indicator of its social development, and Cuba had been the first country to eradicate mother-to-child transmission of HIV and congenital syphilis. The Government had also brought life expectancy to 78 years, eradicated illiteracy and introduced free and universal health care and education.

54. That progress had been made despite the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States for over 50 years and strengthened under the current Administration. Its criminal policy had subjected the Cuban people to hardship, impeded the country's development, affected other nations and continued to harm the interests of United States citizens and companies. Ultimately, States would be able to achieve the Goals of the 2030 Agenda only if they placed social development at the heart of public policies and firmly committed to solidarity and genuine cooperation.

55. **Ms. Picco** (Monaco) said that social inclusion and social protection were key aspects of the social development policy of Monaco. The Government offered aid and subsidies to persons with disabilities for access to housing, transport, health care, sport and culture; had created a special status for non-professional caregivers of children with disabilities; allocated funds for the education of children and adults with disabilities; and regulated the construction of apartment buildings to ensure that they were fit for persons with reduced mobility. It had also introduced regulations to protect persons with disabilities from physical, psychological and sexual violence and economic obstacles. All judicial, police, medical and social service professionals were required to undergo training in that regard. The Government had also established a special commission to oversee the working conditions of persons with disabilities, who could lodge complaints to an ombudsman for any perceived discrimination against them. Monaco had ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in September 2017 and on 3 December each year organized awareness-raising campaigns to commemorate the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

56. **Mr. Overskott** (Norway), speaking as a youth delegate, said that the inclusion of young people was instrumental to achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly because Member States had committed to leave no one behind. Special measures needed to be taken to achieve Goal 4, since marginalized children, such as those from poor families, children with disabilities, girls and children from cultural or linguistic minorities, continued to be disproportionately left behind. Given the importance of safe learning environments for children living in conflict zones or exposed to violence, sexual abuse or prostitution, he urged Member States to protect schools in conflict areas and to join the Safe Schools Declaration.

57. Young people were a unique demographic group that could contribute significantly to peace and reconciliation provided that appropriate policies were in place to enable their participation. Recalling Security Council resolution 2250 (2015) on youth, peace and security, he called on Member States to

include young people in peace negotiations, policymaking and decision-making.

58. **Ms. Moe** (Norway), speaking as a youth delegate, urged Member States to gather in-depth knowledge of children in order to tailor policies to those who lived without parental care or were at risk of losing such care. Broad initiatives relating to children in general did not improve the conditions of that target group sufficiently.

59. In their efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, Member States should heed the voices of all persons who had historically been excluded because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. National and religious particularities did not exempt Governments from their responsibilities to promote and protect their citizens' human rights and fundamental freedoms. Member States should also report regularly on the human rights situation of members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) community and ensure that the concerns of those groups were incorporated into programmes related to the Sustainable Development Goals.

60. **Mr. Kapambwe** (Zambia) said that Zambia remained committed to fostering social justice, equality and inclusiveness, as emphasized in the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development. Nevertheless, poverty levels remained unacceptably high, with over half of the Zambian population living below the poverty line, particularly in rural areas.

61. The Government had responded with numerous economic reforms to promote inclusive growth and sustainable development, all of which underpinned the role of the family as the fundamental unit of society for promoting social integrity and cushioning citizens from socioeconomic difficulties. The most recent national development plan prioritized human development and the reduction of poverty and inequality. The Government also planned to finalize new legislation on social protection by the end of 2017 and had increased budgetary allocations to social protection programmes from 2.7 to 4.2 per cent between 2015 and 2017. Zambia was also working with development partners to strengthen and expand social protection programmes. As a result, national coverage of social cash transfer programmes was projected to more than double in 2017 and would be scaled up further in 2018.

62. **Mr. Hassani Nejad Pirkouhi** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that social development was an integral part of sustainable development that deserved more attention at both the national and international levels. The increasing interdependence of Member States meant that the fulfilment of social development commitments required enhanced international cooperation.

63. The Islamic Republic of Iran had invested considerably in providing its citizens with free education and low-cost health care, as shown by the country's higher ranking in the human development index. At the start of the 2017–18 academic year, its schools had welcomed some 400,000 children of undocumented refugees as part of the commitment to ensure that no child was left behind.

64. The national economic, cultural, and social development plan for the period 2016–2021 included numerous measures to reduce poverty, empower the poor and other disadvantaged persons and promote social insurance and pensions. The Secretariat National Council of the Elderly advised Government agencies on issues faced by elderly persons and proposed regulations to address them. Policymakers actively pursued the inclusion and empowerment of persons with disabilities by setting quotas for the number of persons with disabilities taking university entrance exams and offering tax and insurance incentives to entrepreneurs offering work to persons with disabilities.

65. The Islamic Republic of Iran promoted the family as the basic and fundamental unit of society that contributed to the social inclusion of all, especially young persons, persons with disabilities and the elderly.

66. **Ms. Al-Temimi** (Qatar) said that, in order to accelerate implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development, the international community must foster an environment that was conducive to social development, and must focus, in particular, on empowering individuals, and especially individuals belonging to poor and marginalized groups. Furthermore, to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, the international community must redouble its efforts to address the social challenges posed by crises, tensions and natural disasters. On that basis, Qatar had adopted a people-centred approach in its national development plans and had enacted legislation and taken practical steps to promote development among all sectors within Qatari society.

67. Education was the key to development, and Qatar had developed and supported innovative educational programmes and initiatives both within the country and abroad. Qatari educational projects and institutions had, in fact, provided high-quality primary education

to millions of children and young people worldwide, particularly in crisis- and conflict-stricken regions.

68. Qatar was encouraging young people to play a more prominent role in society and development initiatives within the country and beyond. To that end, and to strengthen their capacity to reject violent extremism, it provided young people with education, training and job opportunities, and supported initiatives to encourage innovation and creativity among young people. In that regard, the Qatar-based organization Silatech had recently signed a memorandum of understanding with the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force with a view to countering extremism through youth empowerment and employability initiatives in the Arab region.

69. Qatar had adopted laws and policies to strengthen the family, which was the fundamental unit of society and could play a key role in spurring social and economic development, and, for over 12 years, had facilitated, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, the Committee's negotiations concerning resolutions on the International Year of the Family. Qatar had also taken steps to strengthen and uphold the rights of persons with disabilities, facilitate their full integration into society and empower them to play an active role in the country's development initiatives. Qatar also accorded particular attention to the rights and needs of older persons.

70. As a result of its successful programmes and policies to promote social and economic development, Qatar ranked first in the Arab world on the human development index of the United Nations Development Programme and thirty-third in the world. Regrettably, however, Qatar's successes in that area were threatened by the illegal unilateral measures that had been adopted against her country. Those measures not only undermined Qatar's efforts to promote development, but also constituted a serious violation of human rights in that they seriously threatened the country's social cohesion.

71. **Mr. Phansourivong** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that given the centrality of social development on the global development agenda, the international community must find ways to address the challenges in areas such as health, education, poverty eradication and the reduction of inequality. Despite the fact that the Lao People's Democratic Republic was a least developed country, his Government had invested significantly in social and economic development and environmental protection. The Sustainable Development Goals had been mainstreamed into the eighth Five-Year National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2016–2020), leading to reduced poverty, improved health care, better education, more employment opportunities and better social security. As youth were the backbone of the country, his Government had also invested in resources to support their development through education, vocational training, job opportunities and campaigns against drug abuse. In addition, it had promoted gender equality at every level in the public and private sectors.

72. His country was committed to fulfilling its obligations as a State party to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Government had also introduced measures to eliminate social discrimination against such persons, and the Lao Disabled People's Association was working to ensure respect for their rights.

73. Respect and care for the elderly had always been an important part of Lao cultural values, and older persons in a family were seen as a source of inspiration, love and warmth for other members of the family and community. His Government was committed to continuing its work to improve development so that everyone would enjoy a better life.

74. **Mr. Hendricks** (South Africa) said that his country had been working tirelessly to align the 2030 Agenda with the Continental Structural Conflict Prevention Framework, the Agenda 2063 of the African Union and the National Development Plan 2030 and ensure effective implementation. Those developmental frameworks were instrumental to poverty eradication, inequality reduction, social inclusion, and the improvement of the living standards of all South Africans, particularly the most vulnerable. However, the majority of young people were still socially and economically excluded. His delegation welcomed the convening of high-level events on the topic of the demographic dividend, held on the margins of the high-level segment of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly, and called for the acceleration of efforts targeting youth employment and social inclusion, mindful of the high cost of inaction on the future of society.

75. In commemoration of the International Day of Older Persons, his Government had also organized an event to promote awareness about services to older persons and to remind South Africans to respect and uphold the dignity of all senior citizens. Given the fundamental role family played in social development, his delegation would continue to advocate for the protection of the family in all its forms.

76. **Mr. Skinner-Klée** (Guatemala) said that it was important to promote the rights of persons with

disabilities, who were often unable to fully enjoy their rights because of issues such as poor accessibility and negative attitudes. With the support of CBM International, the United Nations Children's Fund and the National Institute of Statistics, Guatemala had carried out its second national disability survey, which had revealed that 10.2 per cent of the population had a disability. The issue of disability had been included in the upcoming census, which would enable the Government to tailor its efforts to support persons with disabilities.

77. In addition, his Government was committed to supporting young people, who were the largest yet most poorly represented population group. Sustained and adequate investment was essential in order to tap the talents of young people and ultimately achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Young people must not be excluded from the labour market or the education system, as that not only resulted in poverty but also lost opportunities for training and development.

78. Acknowledging the difficulties faced by older persons, he said that many were lonely, did not have any regular source of income, were not able to secure suitable employment and did not receive social security benefits or a pension. States must increase their efforts to safeguard the fundamental freedoms and quality of life of older persons, including by adopting a specific instrument that reflected the needs of older persons. Lastly, poverty was not solely the result of inequality, but also inadequate technology transfer, human capital flight, failure to implement international trade treaties, corruption, discrimination and lack of solidarity.

79. **Reverend Grysa** (Observer for the Holy See) said that one of the most glaring reasons why people continued to suffer from hunger and inequality, many of them being left behind, was that economic growth did not guarantee social development or address the root causes of inequality and exclusion. Investment, jobs and a diversified economy were indeed indispensable for lifting the poor out of poverty. However, a broader understanding of integral human development was needed in order to achieve lasting gains. It was also necessary to reconsider the understanding of the purpose of the international economy. In an encyclical letter, Pope Francis had counselled that the vision of "might is right" had engendered immense inequality, injustice and acts of violence, since resources ended up in the hands of the first comer or the most powerful. Instead, the global economy should benefit everyone, both materially and spiritually, and the principle of subsidiarity should be applied in social and economic policies.

80. A "culture of encounter" that recognized the poor and vulnerable and involved working with them directly should be promoted. The needs of such people, especially the elderly, youth, persons with disabilities and migrants, should not be reduced to economic terms, and by embracing that culture, those in power could develop their sense of responsibility for the common good. The elderly and persons with disabilities, in particular, faced serious discrimination and violence and needed access to essential support services to engage with society; that was a matter of basic human dignity. More investment in health care and pension funds, for instance, was necessary in order to reduce their vulnerability. Government support for family-based care could save public money and facilitate the provision of care by loved ones.

81. Work was not only a necessity, but a path to growth, human development and personal fulfilment, and social development meant dignified work for young people. Policies encouraging apprenticeships and small loans and opportunities, especially for young women and adolescent girls, should be put in place.

82. The human rights of migrants and refugees, whether migrating for economic reasons or because of persecution and conflict, must be respected and their access to basic services such as primary health care and education for children must be guaranteed. Special attention and care for unaccompanied migrant children and youth benefited the societies where they remained or to which they eventually returned.

83. **Ms. Dikanska** (Bulgaria), speaking as a youth delegate, said that young people should be equal participants in all decision-making processes at the national and global levels. They possessed the knowledge and courage to tackle the major issues facing the world. However, in order to realize their full potential, several challenges to social development needed to be overcome, in order to provide youth with employment, career opportunities and the right to quality education. Those challenges were seen in Bulgaria and around the world. Young people had to have soft skills, applicable across job titles and industries, to participate in the labour market. Participation in sport was one way that the soft skills of discipline, leadership, perseverance and respect for others, for instance, could be honed and then transferred to the classroom or workplace. It was unfortunate that there was still a lack of recognition of the educational advantages it offered to young girls and boys, as such skills contributed to building personality and to social development in general.

84. **Ms. Pandzharova** (Bulgaria), speaking as a youth delegate, said that given the great movements of refugees and migrants currently taking place, intercultural dialogue was an effective tool for building trust and tolerance and supporting social development. Young people in particular could contribute to the social integration of refugees and migrants through education and training, thus enabling them to participate in the labour market. Young people were agents of positive social change, and their full participation was crucial for achieving peace and respect for human rights. Her delegation called upon Member States to recognize the role of young people in ensuring equality, social cohesion and sustainable development for all.

85. **Mr. Joshi** (India) said that his country was working rapidly to deliver on its commitments made in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals, and that equality, social development and the removal of social and economic discrimination were the cornerstone of Government policies. In the area of education, it had attained near full enrolment in primary school and had narrowed the gender gap in middle and higher education. Millions of people were being lifted out of poverty via social development and employment-generation schemes, with priority being given to disadvantaged members of society. The ambitious inclusion policies implemented by the Government, including biometric identity cards, a financial inclusion programme and mobile telephony, had been leveraged to improve efficiency and close financial gaps, resulting in $25 billion worth of benefits being disbursed to 329 million beneficiaries. In addition, other social-sector reforms were being carried out to eliminate open defecation, provide maternity benefits and simplify the tax on goods and services.

86. **Ms. Priya** (India), speaking as a youth delegate, said that the 1.8 billion youth of the world constituted a valuable asset and must be taken into consideration in a sustainable development agenda. Since over 400 million Indians were estimated to be in the age group of 10–24 years, their health and education were central to benefiting from their tremendous potential and realizing the demographic dividend. To that end, the Government had placed emphasis on the empowerment of youth through skill development and entrepreneurship programmes. A new ministry dedicated to such matters had been established, and it had launched several programmes to build capacities and improve the employability of the youth population by such means as increasing the availability of credit and harnessing the benefit of information and communications technology.

87. The international community must understand and respect diversity, and promote equal opportunities and the participation of all nations in the advancement of youth, who were at the heart of the sustainable development. The right to development was an inalienable human right.

88. **Mr. Sukhee** (Mongolia) said that the timely implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was vital for ensuring social development and well-being for all. His country had been an early adopter of the Sustainable Development Goals, and his Government had incorporated the Goals into its plans and programmes addressing poverty, education, health, employment, social protection, gender equality, youth, ageing, disabilities and intersectoral coordination and partnership.

89. Recently amended legislation on social welfare had introduced additional needs-based criteria for caregiver allowances, and the Government had also taken measures to improve the effectiveness of programmes benefiting children. Mongolia was a young nation, with nearly 65 per cent of the population under age 40, and recognizing the central role of youth in society, the Parliament had adopted the Law on Youth Development, which addressed their responsibilities and provided for the establishment of a fund dedicated to their development. The Parliament had also amended laws concerning the elderly and adopted Mongolia's first comprehensive law on the rights of persons with disabilities, which was in compliance with the relevant United Nations Convention.

90. A national programme on cooperative development was currently in its final stage of implementation, resulting in a favourable economic situation and legal environment for cooperatives and small- and medium-size enterprises. The programme also enhanced the competitiveness of such entities and created new jobs. His delegation was the main sponsor of a biennial resolution on cooperatives in social development, and firmly believed that they would enable the fullest possible participation in economic and social development and contribute to the eradication of poverty and hunger.

91. **Mr. Tumasyan** (Georgia), speaking as a youth delegate, said that his generation of young people was fully committed to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, and that young people should be given equal opportunities and the tools necessary to do so. Education must be the highest priority, since

comprehensive and global solutions to borderless challenges would require investment in youth — the best resource of the planet. Technological advancement could free human beings from work that could be done by machines, so that people could devote themselves to developing civilization. Technology was the key to using renewable energy to save the planet from the effects of climate change. Youth should be able to influence decisions related to their futures and use the Sustainable Development Goals as tools to ensure the accountability of Governments and the United Nations. Every country should have youth delegates to the United Nations so that the world would be a better place for everyone by 2030. New leaders were needed, and the youth of today would become those leaders of tomorrow.

92. The greatest challenge for Georgia in achieving the Goals was providing their benefits to the people most excluded from the 2030 Agenda, Georgian compatriots living in the regions of Georgia occupied by the Russian Federation. The youth of Georgia had great respect and love for their Abkhaz and Ossetian brothers and sisters, and cared about their social and economic development and the preservation of their respective traditions, cultures and languages. They also welcomed the efforts of the Government of Georgia towards reconciliation with those compatriots.

93. One day, next to the piece of the Berlin Wall that now rested at United Nations Headquarters, there would be a piece of the razor wire fence that Russia had built to divide the Georgian people. The youth of Georgia extended a hand of love, friendship and brotherhood to the youth of Abkhazia and Ossetia, and called for constructive dialogue, cooperation and communication that would lead to a shared peaceful, prosperous and sustainable future.

94. **Mr. Konfourou** (Mali) said that his Government had executed several strategies to improve living conditions for the population and reduce their vulnerability to social risks. It was also working tirelessly to implement a national policy on social development, which would promote the socioeconomic integration of older persons, persons with disabilities, and women and children in difficult situations, and improve humanitarian action and social aid for the poor and victims of natural disasters. The policy would also help to build community capacities through cooperatives, mutual health insurance associations and employee-owned companies and increase the access of the poor to income-generating activities.

95. The Government had taken measures to ensure that disadvantaged groups had access to employment and basic social services, prioritizing persons with disabilities in particular. Since 2007 the Government had also been carrying out social housing programmes for the most disadvantaged in society and those with medium to low incomes. New agencies had been created to promote employment and to develop young people's entrepreneurship, since youth were enormously important for the country's sustainable development. Currently, the main challenge was the expansion of programmes for compulsory health insurance and medical assistance. Another major Government programme to be implemented over the period 2017–2020 would improve the availability of local investment for the benefit of the least fortunate members of society, thereby reducing inequality and maintaining purchasing power.

96. **Mr. Beleffi** (San Marino) said that Member States should make a collective commitment to the protection and promotion of human rights. The challenges of persistent human rights violations in situations of armed conflict; racial and religious discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance; growing inequality and social exclusion in both developing and the richest countries; and discrimination, abuse and trafficking of refugees and migrants were all interconnected. States must therefore act together to fight poverty and promote employment and decent work, in order to build a more inclusive, safe and just society for all.

97. As required by the 2030 Agenda, the Republic of San Marino had always paid special attention to vulnerable groups. It had been one of the first States to ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and would fully implement it through legislative frameworks and policies for the full participation of persons with disabilities in employment and in the social and cultural spheres. San Marino had signed the voluntary compact to combat and prevent sexual abuse and exploitation in the context of United Nations peacekeeping missions, and hoped for universal ratification and full implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its optional protocols. San Marino had also adopted policies for integrating senior citizens into society, recognizing their experience, knowledge and culture.

98. **Ms. Rocz** (Hungary), speaking as a youth delegate, said that she had travelled around Hungary to promote the Sustainable Development Goals among young people, who had many innovative ideas for solving the problems in their local environment, offering sustainable solutions that could be passed on to future generations. Experts working on youth

policies should consult young people, who could be an enormous asset to their society if included in decision-making and implementation processes. Seeing the tangible results of their work would make young people even more motivated and dedicated.

99. During her tour of Hungary, a survey had been conducted to see which of the Sustainable Development Goals were the most important for young people. The results had shown that, in addition to Goal 8 on decent work and economic growth and Goal 10 on reduced inequalities, the most important goal was Goal 4 on quality education — an education that offered both theoretical knowledge and practical skills. Achieving Goal 4 was a prerequisite for achieving the other 16 Goals. Every young person should be provided with a secure and peaceful environment for a happy and healthy life — the future could be built by building peace.

100. **Ms. Choden** (Bhutan) said that her delegation attached great importance to addressing social development, in accordance with her country's national development philosophy of Gross National Happiness. The eradication of poverty was an overarching goal in national development plans, and Bhutan had been using the National Multidimensional Poverty Index for the past seven years as an official poverty measurement to assess people's needs and formulate appropriate policies. As a result, the proportion of people trapped in poverty had fallen from 23 per cent to 12 per cent between 2007 and 2012. The findings of the Second National Population and Housing Census, conducted in May 2017, were expected to show further reductions.

101. The Government made every effort to invest in the future of young people, who made up 60 per cent of the population. The Overseas Education and Skills Development Scheme provided preferential lending for young people seeking overseas education and skills development. Through such initiatives, the financial institutions of Bhutan were supporting social development.

102. The Royal Society for Senior Citizens provided opportunities to retired seniors to work on the conservation and promotion of cultural heritage. The Ability Bhutan Society empowered individuals with disabilities to live independently and with dignity, through advocacy, direct intervention and training for caregivers.

103. Women played a growing role in leadership and decision-making in Bhutan. The Government was promoting policies that mainstreamed women's participation in all sectors of the economy. The Government had already established 231 early child care development centres, and women civil servants were entitled to six months maternity leave. The Government was working on policies to expand this to the private sector.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.